

Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S2468-080X(17)30021-3

DOI: [10.1016/j.mre.2017.07.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mre.2017.07.001)

Reference: MRE 56

To appear in: *Matter and Radiation at Extremes*

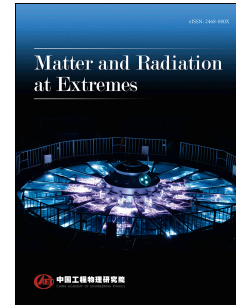
Received Date: 2 March 2017

Revised Date: 7 April 2017

Accepted Date: 4 July 2017

Please cite this article as: V.K. Tripathi, T.-C. Liu, X. Shao, Laser radiation pressure proton acceleration in gaseous target, *Matter and Radiation at Extremes* (2017), doi: 10.1016/j.mre.2017.07.001.

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Laser radiation pressure proton acceleration in gaseous target

V.K. Tripathi^{1*}, Tung-Chang Liu², Xi Shao²

¹Physics Department, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, New Delhi 110016, India

²Department of Physics, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742, USA

Received 2 March 2017; revised 7 April 2017; accepted 4 July 2017

Available online

Abstract

An analytical model for hole boring proton acceleration by a circularly-polarized CO₂ laser pulse in a gas jet is developed. The plasma density profile near the density peak is taken to be rectangular, with inner region thickness l around a laser wavelength and density 10% above the critical, while the outside density is 10% below the critical. On the rear side, plasma density falls off rapidly to a small value. The laser suffers strong reflection from the central region and, at normalized amplitude $a_0 \geq 1$, creates a double layer. The space charge field of the double layer, moving with velocity $v_f \hat{z}$, reflects up-stream protons to $2v_f$ velocity, incurring momentum loss at a rate comparable to radiation pressure. Reflection occurs for $v_f \leq \omega_p \sqrt{z_f l m / m_p}$, where m and m_p are the electron and proton masses, z_f is the distance travelled by the compressed electron layer and ω_p is the plasma frequency. For Gaussian temporal profile of the laser and parabolic density profile of the upstream plasma, the proton energy distribution is narrowly peaked.

PACS Codes: 41.75.Jv; 52.27.Ny; 52.38.Kd

Keywords: laser-driven acceleration; radiation pressure proton acceleration; relativistic plasmas

* Corresponding author: Tung-Chang Liu, tcliu@umd.edu

E-mail address:

Peer review under responsibility of Science and Technology Information Center, China Academy of Engineering Physics.

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